

## It's a Dog's Life

Are you ready to embark in the wonderful but difficult world of owning a dog? Owning and properly caring for a dog is hard work. In my next life, I am coming back as a dog! My Mia has the life of a spoiled princess! When we walk-- (I walk, she prances)-- down the street, she gets oohed and aahed, petted and offered treats. Does her admiring crowd think she just wakes up looking pampered and oh so cute? Not hardly! It takes money, time, effort, and more money to make Princess Mia look so dashing to her adoring fans.

Grooming has become an event, beginning with her monthly visit to the doggie hair salon. There, after three hours and a minimum one hundred dollar fee, she is shampooed, cut, fluffed, and blown out to perfection. Grooming doesn't end with this monthly process. Mia is brushed daily – including her teeth—when she wakes up every day! No wonder she looks picture-perfect every time she leaves the house. Mia also requires ear cleaning on a regular basis, to ensure that the yucky gunk buildup doesn't cause an ear infection. Overall, maintenance of a dog, especially one that is high maintenance like Mia, is a daily responsibility.

Dogs, like children, need parameters. Part of the responsibility of being a dog “mother” is the necessary training implicit in dog ownership. No one likes a child with no boundaries and the same goes for our pets. Hours of training have Mia sitting, coming, healing and performing numerous tricks on command. This now obedient dog was the hard work of myself and regular visits to the local Petco. Throughout numerous days, weeks and months of training, Mia demonstrates mastery of various commands and tends to make other dog owners jealous. In our

visits to the dog park by our home, Mia socializes well with other dogs and is able to show off her tricks in front of others.

As a single person, I spend about seventy-five dollars a week on food; which is about the same amount I spend on Mia's all-natural raw diet! Yes, she is finicky, but her diet keeps her coat shiny, her skin perfect, and her eyes bright! By converting her diet to all-natural, she no longer has the pesky, black eye boogies that many poodles encounter. She is a healthy specimen of dog – just the way she and I like it. During her yearly visits to the veterinarian, he comments about the benefits of her current diet and that she is sure to live a long life. Her checkups include full physicals and any vaccines or other medications she may need. In addition to her regular feedings, Mia receives special “treats” for good behavior – treats that are well balanced to insure she doesn't gain too much weight. When selecting the proper nutritional route for a dog, be sure to check the calorie count on both daily food and treats and do not allow your pet to overindulge! Imagine if you got a chocolate bar every time you did something correct-you may end a few pounds overweight after a few weeks of this indulgence!

Next time you pass the pet store and see those cute, playful puppies in the window take a moment to think: taking care of a dog is an involved, expensive, continuous process—although one filled with many emotional and satisfying rewards. Mia, although a tremendous responsibility, brings much joy to my daily life. Owning a dog is a lot to undertake but the happy moments with Mia make all of the hard work disappear and this princess truly is my “best friend”.